

DRTA: A STRATEGY FOR INTEGRATING READING PURPOSE AND CRITICAL THINKING OF STUDENTS IN READING TEXT

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Abstract

This journal highlights the findings of a study of the implementation of directed reading-thinking activity (DRTA) in teaching-learning process of reading descriptive text. The aim of the study was to describe how the DRTA strategy was implemented in a junior high school. The data were taken from observation. The result reveals that the DRTA was implemented by integrating students' purpose and critical thinking while they were in reading activity.

Kata Kunci: isi, format, artikel.

Abstrak

Jurnal ini menyoroti temuan-temuan dalam penelitian mengenai penerapan directed reading-thinking activity dalam proses belajar-mengajar membaca teks descriptive dalam lingkungan sekolah SMP. Tujuan diadakannya penelitian ini untuk memberi gambaran penerapan strategi DRTA. Data diambil dari hasil observasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa DRTA diterapkan dengan cara mengintegrasikan kemampuan siswa dalam membuat tujuan dalam membaca dan pemikiran kritis mereka terhadap teks yang diberikan.

Keywords: content, formatting, article.

BACKGROUND

Recent scientific studies have allowed us to understand more than ever before about how literacy develops, why some children have difficulty, and what constitutes best instructional practice. The studies above indicate that learning reading is important. They show that To enter the present society, people must know how learn by reading. Since they grow through school, people are asked increasingly to read the complex informational and graphical texts in their courses.

In other hand, influenced by many factors, there are not a lot Indonesian able to read English text fluently even after they graduate from high school. It is commonly known that EFL reading comprehension is kind of a very complex process. Cohen (1994) and Anderson (1999) as noted by Aek Phakiti (2006: 1) say that reading involves multiple interactions among the reader factors and contextual factors. Reader factors in here are represented by, for example, first language literacy, L1 background, language proficiency, background knowledge, motivation, metacognition, and strategy use. Meanwhile, the contextual factor represented by the text topic and content, text type and genre, and text readability. Depending on the factors, EFL reading may be much slower and less successful than reading L1. Such slow and wasteful procedures are commonly due to a lack of reading confidence and so with the learners' motivation created by the manner of reading in EFL classes.

Teachers in school, however, have a big role to give some engagement that is improving students' reading comprehension by using some strategies. Various strategies of language teaching have been created, used and replaced. According to Stauffer as quoted by Crawford (2005: 44) Directed Reading Thinking Activity is a popular strategy for engaging students in reading texts for understanding. DRTA is a strategy in which student are guided through reading, making predictions, rereading, confirming, or readjusting predictions. The Directed Reading Thinking Activity can be one alternative strategy used by teachers in teaching reading comprehension. Since reading is an active process, the students must be active in doing the reading. In Directed Reading Thinking Activity, the students are invited to be active readers within their groups. The students will be divided into small groups to learn the texts to help them have a supporting and comfortable environment to read, give opinion, and cooperate.

As stated in Standar Isi, one of the text types taught for MTs/SMP student is a descriptive text presented in grade eight. Stanley (1988: 12) mentions that description presents the appearance of things that occupy space, whether they are objects, people, buildings or cities. In this kind of text, the students are required to list the characteristics of something and usually deal with the physical appearance of the described thing (Smalley et. al., 2001). In other words, a particular

person, place or thing is described in details in this composition. The description tells the object as the way it is without being affected by the writers' personal opinion. In reading Descriptive Text, students will learn about the characteristic of this genre and why it is written to help them comprehend its content. There are two characteristics of Descriptive Text that distinguish this text from other texts. They are the linguistic feature and the generic structure. The most common linguistic feature used in Descriptive Text is simple present tense. The generic structure of Descriptive Text is identification which mentions the special participant and description which mention the part, quality, and characteristic of subject being described. Based on curriculum of Depdiknas (2004: 35) the purpose of Descriptive Text is to describe a particular place, thing, or person.

Reading descriptive texts plays an important role in English classes for junior high school, including at SMP Rahmat Surabaya. At the school, reading descriptive texts is taught to eight grade students. To help the students become active skilled readers, DR-TA is applied in reading descriptive texts classrooms. Concerning with this case, the writer is interested in observing the application of this technique in teaching reading English.

According to statement above, the writer will conduct the research in implementation of Directed Reading-Thinking Activity (DRTA) in teaching-learning process of reading Descriptive Text to the eight graders of SMP Rahmat Surabaya.

The focus of this article is in providing the answer to question: "How Directed Reading Thinking Activity strategy implemented in teaching learning process of Descriptive Text?"

It is aimed to describe the implementation of DRTA strategy in teaching learning process of Descriptive Text.

METHOD

To facilitate the problem, the researcher used descriptive qualitative study. As cited by Susanto (2003: 36), descriptive study is designed to identify and describe the observed phenomenon in the form of words rather than numbers. It is in line with Merriam (1998: 8) who states that in qualitative study, words and pictures are used mostly rather than numbers to convey what the researcher has found about the phenomenon. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to describe the data as it is like.

In this study, the writer did not take part in the process of teaching learning process. He only observed in the classroom without doing any intervention in teaching learning process. He described and reported the activities from the beginning until the end of the class.

The study was conducted in SMP Rahmat Surabaya. The subject of the study was the teacher and the student of VIII class B. The teacher was the facilitator that helped students during the learning reading process which was using DRTA as a strategy.

The data of the study came from the result of observation that was obtained through observation checklist and the result of reading task (assessment). The data were collected by observing the teacher's and students' activity during the teaching learning process in the classroom. The researcher also collected the students' worksheet after being taught using Directed Reading - Thinking Activity (DR-TA) to check the students reading comprehension. In the observation, the researcher not only observed but also took pictures of the teaching learning process and the phenomena when the DRTA is implemented in reading description text. The information about phenomena happens in teaching-learning process could be added specifically by taking note and photographs. The data of this research is the result of the observation itself.

In this study, the main instrument to collect the data was the writer itself. It is in line with Merriam (1998: 7) who states that in qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. To conduct this research, the researcher also used several instruments. They are as follows:

The checklist was used in getting any information on what was happened in the class activities. It was made to control whether the implementation of DRTA was in line with its common procedure or the teacher gave some modification. In addition, the observation checklist comprised the teacher's and the student.

In this study, the data is collected through analysis technique in non-participant observation. The subject of the study is only observed by using observation checklist. Researcher kept did not influence the natural attitude or behavior of the subject of the study. In the observation, the researcher not only observed but also took pictures of the teaching learning process and the phenomena when the DRTA is implemented in reading description text. The information about phenomena

happens in teaching-learning process could be added specifically by taking note and photographs. The data of this research is the result of the observation itself.

After collecting the data using several instruments above, then it was continued by analyzing the data collected. First, the researcher analyzed the data got from the observation checklist. The data was described according to its process. The data was presented in descriptive manner. The conversation and pictures during teaching-learning process was attached to support the data. Students' worksheets were analyzed. The components of that works were converted into Literal Level, Interpretive Level, or Applied Level.

DISCUSSION

Observation was conducted in February 3, 4, and 6 and the DRTA strategy was applied from the first till the last meeting. The teacher who implemented this strategy is Mr. Arifin. In the implementation of DRTA, the teacher prepared all the stuff by himself. During the observation the writer was present yet he did not take any action in the class activity. He only sat and took notes.

Observation checklist explained the result of the observation of the implementation during those three meetings while the students' reading task explained the students' comprehension level

English teachers in this school apparently use bilingual communication to deliver their material. It is believed by some English educators that this bilingual method is able to help students who have low level comprehension to get to understand what h/she said. Mr. Arifin was just one of the club members. As long the teaching-learning process, students had no problem with all instruction was given by him because of his way to communicate.

During teaching-learning, Mr. Arifin used inductive learning process. Instead of explaining a given concept and following this explanation with example, the teacher presents students with many examples showing how the concept is used. Before he opened discussion about the descriptive text, He little talked about Mr. President of Indonesia, Bali, and Playstation then he asked the students to make opinions about them. Asking students' opinion was a trick from Mr. arifin to lure the students to draw their knowledge about the subjects.

In other time, by using the first meeting experience, Mr Arifin explained the nature of description text on second meeting. It built up the students' consciousness so they can see the concept of DRTA more clearly. Therefore on second

meeting, the DRTA task was done far better because of they already had the purpose.

In teaching descriptive text, Mr. Arifin implemented the DRTA adopted from ICLE forum. There, students answered the four questions, "What I know I know," "What I think I know," "What I think I'll learn," and "What I know I learned," to increase their comprehension and retention of information. In the first three sections of the DR/TA worksheet, students used brainstorming skills to think about and "download" the information they know, they think they know, and what they expect to learn about a specific topic. With this strategy, students could write freely since they know they will not be graded on the correctness of their answers. This risk-free method encouraged students to use critical thinking skills. The objectives of this implementation were asking students read informational text with a purpose and with specific expectations. Students will activate prior knowledge of the subject and ask questions before reading. They will prepare a sheet of new information and facts to add to their knowledge base. All the objectives were completely done well enough by the eight graders of SMP Rahmat Surabaya. It was because it was not the first time they implemented this strategy. They already did the task with Narrative text in first semester. So they only needed a little adaptation with the descriptive text. They just got that in second meeting. It was similar to the procedural steps of DRTA by Dr. Joan P. Here was the comparison.

The Implementation of DRTA in SMP Rahmat

1. Developing Readiness to Read the Selection Text

As described before, the teacher in his teaching used inductive learning process. Before he taught the students the descriptive text and gave them a task, the teacher was concerned with building a rich conceptual background and activating schemata for the text, identifying and presenting any crucial vocabulary items in context. Even in second meeting, he was helping students establish some purpose for reading.

The teacher built a rich conceptual background in:

- a.) letting the students share related experiences
- b.) telling of his own experiences and opinion related to the topic
- c.) using pictures as visual aids.

2. DRTA cycle

The English teacher of SMP Rahmat Surabaya was aware that the DRTA activity is reading lesson with a group of students who have the

same fundamental reading abilities and who read the same fresh material at the same time. He knew the abilities of his students and he even knew that they had experiences to the topics he would give. He knew that the students already come to the Jatim Park last year. So he decided that the Jatim Park was familiar enough for them. The students already had the fundamental reading abilities –the background knowledge on Jatim Park. The teacher set the topic which was familiar with the students and then he promised that the reading topic would give them new information they never know before. They should guess what the new information is and it made they set their own purposes on reading activity. This phase, was implemented in the third box question, “what I think I’ll learn?”

In doing so, each student tested and retested ideas, ordered and reordered purposes, reasons and judges in an effort to answer questions, insuring active participation in the reading and thus increasing comprehension. The students reported their findings to the group and prove them by reading the appropriate passages. The students employed word identification skills in the context of their reading. The teacher, however, was always ready to aid with word identification or comprehension. The members of the group were responsible to one another for proving predictions, offering one another suggestions or generally maintaining self-respect for each member of the group.

3. Comprehension Check

The comprehension check in DRTA technically was done when students was checking their own works in first three question by comparing it with the facts they got while they were reading the text. In this phase, students were led to discuss related concepts, and to consider the content of the selection in light of their own experiences. This should be relative to the purposes set, and done informally. Later, their works could be formulated that require written responses to include:

- a. Factual questions which develop the habit of accurate, careful reading
- b. Thought questions which involve sequence of events
- c. Judgment of a character's behavior
- d. Understanding inferences
- e. Drawing conclusions
- f. Making generalizations

- g. Interpreting feelings and attitudes of the characters and of the author
- h. Personal feelings toward characters
- i. Comparisons and contrasts

4. Rereading the Selection Text for Purposed by the Teacher

Different with other phase, Mr. Arifin, the teacher, did not do this step in one meeting. The time estimation of teaching in first two meetings was only 45 minutes. It was not enough for doing rereading other text for specific purposes. So in first meeting, this activity is substituted in next meeting. In the second meeting he chose text that were rich in content and were closely related to pupils' experiences. So he took the descriptive text entitled ‘Rabbit’. Everybody was surely familiar with this animal. But as always, the DRTA was played curiosity of reader. Mr. Arifin challenged his students to guess and to find out what is the new information they would get in this reading. Much independent reading can be motivated by extending the interest of the class in finding out more about certain topics introduced in the original selection.

5. Evaluation

As like rereading, the evaluation gave by the teacher was always came on the next meeting. It even happened before students were prepared on the rereading activity. In the evaluation activity, teacher helped students to aware some stuff they might be pass. For example in second meeting, Mr. Arifin explained the nature of descriptive text more detail. He used the passage of Jatim Park as the material. He said that in every descriptive text, there were substances called identified phenomenon and parts, quantities, and characteristics of the subject that must be described. According to generic structure, identifying phenomenon of the Jatim Park could be read in the first paragraph. It was contained with the reputation and general classification of Jatim Park. This part was called identification part. The next paragraphs were called description paragraphs. They mentioned parts, quantities, and characteristics of Jatim Park. All descriptive text shared this nature. So in the next reading descriptive tasks, students were hoped to be able to set their own purpose for reading by searching the information

according to its parts, quantities, and characteristic.

Since the writer used James H. Berry model to identify comprehension level of someone, which is said that there were three level of reading comprehension: Literal, Interpretive, and Applied Level, this study showed that students in this class were various on literal and interpretive levels. The VIII B Students of SMP Rahmat Surabaya are attempting to understand what the author meant by what s/he said in the story, paragraph, or textbook.

It is presumed that they have already memorized certain facts at the literal level and now they are attempting to see the implications of the author's words. The students need to understand which they have memorized at the literal level of comprehension.

Knowing the 'how is' and 'why is' behind this level of understanding is obviously a much deeper or profound level of thinking. Interestingly, this is a level of comprehension that college instructors will most likely expect students to get to in their courses. The instructors of course want them to memorize dates, facts, and details. However, they also ask their students to be able to understand how that information relates to and is connected to the "bigger picture" of what the students are studying.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

In this chapter, the researcher will describe about the conclusions and suggestions as the result and the review of this research. The researcher also tries to give some suggestions to the readers.

Conclusion

From the results of study, the researcher can make conclusion that Directed Reading - Thinking Activity (DR-TA) strategy was good to students of SMP Rahmat Surabaya and so it could be used to eight grade students in other school as alternative teaching strategy. It helped students use brainstorming skills to download all the information they know. With this strategy students could compare the information they knew when they started with the new information they have learned.

Moreover, the DRTA encouraged students' morale in reading optimally. It gave them purpose of reading and challenged their knowledge to predict substance of the topic. Every challenge they already done by making accurate predictions built their confidence to comprehend the next text.

The reading comprehension level of the eight graders was various on literal and interpretive levels. Students of SMP Rahmat Surabaya were attempting to understand what the author meant by what s/he said in the story, paragraph, or textbook. It is presumed that they have already memorized certain facts at the literal level and now they are attempting to see the implications of the author's words. The students need to understand which they have memorized at the literal level of comprehension. Interestingly, this is a level of comprehension that college instructors will most likely expect students to get to in their courses. The instructors of course want them to memorize dates, facts, and details.

Suggestions

Some suggestions might be useful to improve students' reading ability as follows:

In applying Directed Reading - Thinking Activity (DR-TA) strategy, the teacher should be more creative to make good atmosphere in classroom, so the students will be more active and be motivated to participate in class. The teacher should ask the students to use English while teaching learning process. It will be better if they use English every time in the school. It is a good habit for students.

The other researchers are expected to make good improvement in similar research related to the use of Directed Reading - Thinking Activity (DR-TA) in teaching English but in different kind of genre, grade and language skills because this research still has a lot of thing the need to explore.

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